

**Land Stewardship Committee Meeting**  
**June 16, 2020**  
**Via teleconference - 7:00 PM**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Present:** Tom Brownrigg, Dwight DeMay, Debby Geltner, Warren Lyman, Rhonda Michaud, Andrew Wilmot, and Conservation Administrator Sylvia Willard

This meeting was conducted by Zoom teleconference due to the Covid-19 pandemic, with all participants at home. The meeting was opened at 7:05 PM by Chairman Lyman.

The May 12, 2020 meeting minutes were approved as amended. The minutes of the May 19, 2020 meeting with the Deer Control Committee were approved as written.

**Old Business**

**1. Evaluation of Signs on Town-owned Conservation Lands: Davis Corridor/Malcolm Land and other signs**

Andrew Wilmot had inspected signs on the Davis Corridor and Malcolm Land. The plywood forming the base of the primary conservation sign near the intersection of Stearns St. and Two Rod Rd. is flaking at the top. Geltner said that this sign is very old, and probably should be replaced. Willard noted that a similar sign at the north parking lot at Greenough is in good shape. The kiosk in the parking lot is rotting under the roof and the brochure pockets have insect or other damage. Willard said that the kiosk belongs to the Trustees of Reservations, and Lyman said no action is needed by LSC. All other signs are in good condition, except that the secondary conservation signs (SCS) need cleaning. Brush needs to be cleared away from the SCS about 50 ft. from the Bedford Rd. entrance. Wilmot has also checked the signs on the Deacon and Carr Lands but has not written up his notes.

Regarding Buttrick Woods, since there is no trail, Lyman suggested waiting until a trail is established before adding signs. Willard said that signs will be needed for the following lands: Hartwell Road, Russell, and Woodward. Additional town land will be transferred to the existing Woodward Land after additional Woodward property has been sold to a developer, which should happen in a few months.

Lyman will consolidate the sign information and make a master table for new and replacement signs. Lyman said that he has mounted the Benfield Land on new posts, and the sign is ready to be returned to Benfield Land. He was hoping that the DPW could do this, since they installed the two signs there. Lyman asked where the sign should be located. Brownrigg suggested putting it in the field near the entrance from the cart path, but on the opposite (north) side of the trail from the other sign. Lyman will select a location. Willard will contact Gary Davis (DPW) and ask if the DPW will install the sign, and will also ask if DPW has handicap parking signs.

## 2. Proposal by Judy Asarkof to create a natural meadow for pollinators (draft not ready)

Prior to the meeting, Asarkof sent Lyman an email outlining a revised proposal, as follows:

- 1) Do a literature review on options and methods used in New England to restore meadows-deliverable to LSC would be a paper.
- 2) Take the property (Fox Hill as one option) and do an inventory of existing plants. Deliverable-a GIS existing vegetation map.
- 3) In fall, meet with LSC and discuss what options are agreed upon based upon other experiences in New England and what vegetation is currently there (native and non-native).

Due to a conflict, Asarkof was not able to attend the meeting. Lyman asked for any questions or comments, since he would like to respond to her revised proposal. Geltner questioned the need for a GIS map, and suggested instead doing a plant inventory with estimated percentages of different plant types, e.g. 50% goldenrod, etc. Willard thought that this project should “start small”, since projects have been started and later abandoned, and mentioned the expense associated with Towle Field restoration. Willard said that there are lots of invasive plants at the Woodward Land that could be removed as part of this project, and that the Russell Land was also a possible location. Lyman will work with Asarkof to prepare a proposal for ConsCom.

## 3. Fox Hill nursery plants.

Willard has not talked to John Bakewell recently, since she would like him to focus on a proposal for Towle Field first. She will contact him regarding his remaining trees at Fox Hill after he has completed his proposal.

## 4. Opportunities on the LSC 7-year Action Plan

Lyman asked members to review the plan and think of activities that interested them.

## 5. Discussions with LEPC on Cranberry Bog parking, and other matters

John Ballantine, an abutter to the Cranberry Bog, sent an email on June 1 suggesting signage at the bog for walkers during the pandemic. Previous signage for conservation lands regarding safety was installed by the Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC). Ballantine sent an image of sign at NARA Park in Acton with safety instructions for walkers. Ballantine had previously recommended the formation of a Cranberry Bog Stewardship Committee that would perform maintenance such as field mowing and clearing the flumes of debris.

Regarding the bog, Geltner said that if parking were reduced, the number of walkers would be reduced, and safety will improve. Willard said that she contacted the Carlisle Police and that parking is now restricted to one side of Curve St.

Willard said that it would be very difficult to remove sticks from beavers in the flumes by hand, and requires heavy equipment. She also thought that management of the bog should be supervised by a single person, and that Mark Duffy be kept informed of any needed work.

ConsCom will discuss Ballantine's proposals at their next meeting on June 18. Lyman suggested LSC wait until after the ConsCom meeting before discussing these issues further.

#### 6. "Burma-Shave" dog signs at the Bog

Lyman said that he has seen more dog excrement at the bog recently, and thought it might be good to reinstall the "Burma-Shave" series of four signs. The signs were originally printed on one side, and were last mounted along the central dike trail. LSC members decided to keep the signs one-sided and to place them in this general location again. Lyman will send Willard the PowerPoint presentation for the signs and Willard will print them and mount them in protective sleeves, allowing additional space (approximately ½ inch) around the borders for mounting.

#### 7. Virtual meeting with BOS on deer hunting

On June 11, the BOS discussed proposed changes to the deer hunting regulations with the Deer Control Committee; Lyman gave a brief summary. A motion was made to make changes to the regulations, but a vote was never taken. One BOS member did not attend, and of the four selectmen, two appeared to be in favor of discontinuing the hunt on town lands. The BOS asked the DCC to address some concerns and revise their proposal for discussion at the next BOS meeting.

At the same meeting, Geltner provided a written statement summarizing LSC's position on hunting with only 30 minutes to prepare; her statement follows.

"The Land Stewardship Committee supports the bow-hunting program in Carlisle. Let me tell you why:

- **We need to preserve biodiversity.** If we do nothing and allow deer to reproduce at the current rate without increasing predation, we will lose even more of the essential understory and decrease regeneration potential. The forest will slowly and inevitably change to a simpler composition and structure, greatly reducing the number of wildlife species.

- **Inaction brings ecological and economic costs:**

Ecologically, over browsing will reduce native species that will be replaced with non-native invasive plant species. It is very difficult to reverse this trend once it has advanced without major effort and expense with no guarantee of success. At this point our forests still have a chance at regeneration and invasive species suppression by native plants if we continue to address this issue with predation.

Economically, more deer means more deer movement as deer seek diminishing resources which means more damage to crops, landscaping and timber production plus more

vehicle-deer collisions. There are already more than 1 million vehicle-deer collisions every year in the U.S. costing more than \$1.1 billion and annual deer consumption causes more than \$1 billion in damage to farms, gardens, and timber production.

- **Conclusion** - Forest ecology evolves over an extensive time scale and the impact from chronically overabundant deer populations can have consequences that extend over decades and possibly even centuries. Given the high reproductive potential of deer combined with the human extirpation of the gray wolf and mountain lion, persistent human predation of deer is needed to help maintain an ecological balance that will also help to protect deer herd health. The alternative is allowing the local deer population to be controlled by starvation, disease, vehicular accidents, and some natural predation, all of which will be insufficient to protect forest ecology and biodiversity.”

LSC members thanked Geltner for her memorandum and statement to BOS supporting deer hunting on town-owned lands.

Willard mentioned that the Town of Lexington hired an environmental student group from Minuteman Technical High School to produce deer exclosures and monitor areas inside and outside for deer browse. Unfortunately, the study was terminated due to the pandemic. Willard has requested a copy of their plan.

Jonathan DeKock, chairman of the Deer Control Committee (DCC) contacted Lyman and requested that Lyman ask if an LSC member would be interested in joining the DCC (a member is resigning). Lyman asked LSC members if someone would be interested, but no one expressed an interest. Geltner thought that, as a member of the LSC, she would prefer to remain independent of the DCC to preserve the validity of any related research that is done. Willard noted that Alex Parra is the ConsCom representative to DCC.

## **New Business**

### **1. Election of LSC Officers**

DeMay agreed to serve as co-chair, with Lyman as the other co-chair. Brownrigg will continue as Secretary. All voted in favor.

### **2. Other New Business**

Lyman volunteered to continue working on the conservation lands sign project, and assisting Asarkof with her proposal. He also agreed to continue as LSC liaison with the Cranberry Bog Working Group, which has been in hiatus since mid-March due to a heavy work load.

Sally Zielinski has been updating a list of invasive plants in Carlisle as part of the Open Space & Recreation Plan. Brownrigg suggested that LSC members pick a conservation land and note the invasive plant species found, and approximate numbers.

Michaud recently found a reference to a scientific paper that used chemiluminescent glow sticks to attract salamanders and frogs during the spring migration. Animals attracted to the glow

5sticks are captured in traps and released. This could be a way of determining the locations of Blue-spotted Salamander and other species on town lands. Brownrigg contacted Jacob (Jake) Kubel, a NHESP herpetologist, for his opinion. Kubel thought this would not harm the animals provided the right type of trap were used, and noted that a special permit is required. The best time to try this would be during the spring migration in March and April. Michaud and Brownrigg plan to pursue this project later this year. Willard noted that a Priority Habitat polygon in the Hart Farm area was removed in the latest NHESP map (2017).

**Next Meetings:**

- July 14, 2020 @ 7 PM
- August 11, 2020 @ 7 PM

**Documents discussed at meeting:**

- D. Geltner, Land Stewardship Committee Deer Management Statement, prepared for the Board of Selectmen (BOS), June 3, 2020.
- D. Geltner, The Land Stewardship Committee Supports the Bow-hunting Program in Carlisle, statement presented at BOS meeting June 9, 2020.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 PM.

Submitted by Tom Brownrigg

Minutes approved: 8/11/20